

# THE Sun SAYS

## EU muppets

**TWO men stand in the way of a Brexit deal benefiting millions of people: a cognac-soaked clown and a puffed-up dandy.**

For months British voters and politicians have been mocked, belittled and abused by EU head Jean-Claude Juncker and chief negotiator Michel Barnier.

The Sun had assumed Brussels would engage professionals to handle the most vital negotiation in decades. Instead these posturing buffoons are in charge.

What do they hope to achieve with their daily barbs, poisonous briefings, pig-headed intransigence and exorbitant demands? If it's to show other electorates how hard it is to leave the EU, they're rather labouring the point.

If it's to intimidate Britain into rethinking Brexit, they are in la-la land.

That ship sailed long ago. Hearts have hardened. With every sneering insult, Brits grow more certain we made the right choice and that the EU, not our Government, will be to blame if talks fail.

Compared with Barnier, Brexit Secretary David Davis is a model of affable flexibility, tact and professionalism.

A harmonious deal looks increasingly unlikely as the clock ticks and Barnier and Juncker keep up their destructive double-act. We must prepare to leave without one. But that need not happen.

It is time for the grown-ups, Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron, to seize negotiators by the throat and tell them to stop wasting time with point-scoring one-upmanship. Big firms on the Continent – Volkswagen, BMW, Mercedes, Siemens, Renault – should demand it.

A “no deal” Brexit will cost them dear.

**Their profits and the vast number of jobs depending on them cannot be at the mercy of blockheads in Brussels.**

## Brexit hypocrite

**IS ex-Minister Nicky Morgan unaware how ludicrous she sounds accusing Brexit-voting colleagues of “undermining” negotiations?**

She'd scrap them, and the referendum vote, if she had her way.

She and sidekick Anna Soubry were mediocre Tory ministers who have been bent on causing Theresa May trouble ever since she fired them.

Tories in their Leave-backing constituencies should haul them in and demand they represent voters' views.

**Which means not obstructing the EU Withdrawal Bill — and falling in behind the Government's Brexit plan.**

## A sick waste

**WHY is NHS England wasting precious resources writing tedious warnings to patients and staff about the Press?**

Leave aside the implication of the 1,500-word lecture being that journos are jackals. The health service should be focusing on treating terror victims, not telling them how to “control their story”.

**If they want to speak to a reporter, it's none of the NHS's business.**



# JAMES Forsyth

ON POWER AND POLITICS

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A DARK-HORSE contender for the Tory leadership is coming into view.

Mark Harper is being tipped by a growing number of MPs to succeed Theresa May when she steps down.

One MP who thinks Harper is the right choice makes the case that he squares the circle: He is both a fresh face, is not in the current Government and is experienced, having been Chief Whip and Immigration Minister.

Another factor in Harper's favour is that as Chief Whip, he was neutral during the EU referendum, meaning he isn't hated by either Brexiteers or Remainers. Indeed, with



## NEW RUNNER IN LEADERSHIP STAKES

the Tories so divided, the fact his position in the party is slightly ambiguous could help him.

For instance, in 2005, he backed right-winger Liam Fox for the leadership. But he was also David Cameron's Chief Whip.

“He knows nearly all colleagues, inside and out,” one senior Tory MP observes.

Harper is also ensuring he gets to know the new intake. Tories were struck by how he went out of his way to introduce them to Cameron when the former Prime Minister

visited the Commons on Wednesday to pick up his leaving present. Theresa May, who didn't offer Harper a job in her Cabinet, was not a huge fan when he was at the Home Office.

She felt he let work pile up on his desk. She was also less than impressed when he had to resign over his cleaner's immigration status. But May won't get to choose her successor.

The fact Harper is being touted as a potential PM is a reminder there will be no shortage of candidates in the Tory leadership race.

# Labour risks crisis if it votes Remain

**ON Monday at midnight, Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party will make its first big post-election mistake.**

Its MPs will be whipped to vote against the EU Withdrawal Bill. Up to now, Labour has managed to have its cake and eat it on Brexit.

At the last election, Labour MPs in Brexit-backing seats could say their party wasn't against it, that it had voted for Article 50.

Meanwhile, in Remain-voting areas, Labour hoovered up votes from those angry about Britain leaving the EU.

This strategy enabled Labour to keep hold of nearly all of its seats in heavily Brexit areas while at the same time getting prosperous metropolitan voters, who would be hammered by Corbyn's tax policies, to vote for them in a Brexit protest.

Remarkably, 39 per cent of Financial Times readers voted Labour despite Corbyn's hostility to the City and high earners.

But by opposing the withdrawal bill, Labour is endangering this coalition.

As one excited Tory tells me, they will now be able to attack Labour for voting against leaving the EU.

A significant number of Labour MPs with Brexit-backing constituencies are worried about this. The Tories who liaise with Labour Brexiteers think as many as 35 Labour MPs could defy their leader on Monday.

So why is Labour taking this risk? The first reason is that this is a great opportunity for them to cause trouble for the Government.

With several Tory MPs unhappy about bits of the bill, they have a chance of defeating the Government on at least some amendments.

Secondly, there are those on the Labour side who think this bill simply gives the Tory Government too much power.

But the third reason is the most important. They don't want a new pro-European, pro-single



market party to be formed. With the Tories in turmoil, perhaps the biggest threat to Corbyn's chances of making it to No10 is the creation of a new centre party. It would draw more votes from Labour than from any other party.

This new party would have no trouble raising money – some deep-pocketed individuals have privately made clear they would be prepared to support it.

But no politician has been prepared to make the leap.

Corbyn and his team want to deny pro-single market Labour MPs an excuse to jump – hence the party's softening position on Brexit. But with the Brexit talks turning nasty, Labour's position is a risk. The EU side are ramping up the rhetoric – note their distinctly undiplomatic attack on David Davis this week.

If this continues, the public will likely side with their own Government rather than an EU that looks like it is trying to bully Britain into handing over

tens of billions of pounds. One minister closely involved with the withdrawal bill tells me: “I want Barnier and Juncker to keep doing what they are doing. “It will either force Merkel and the others to make Barnier and Juncker move or shore up support for no-deal at home.”

At the heart of Government, they remain confident there will be a deal in the end.

One well-placed source predicts the EU will ultimately adopt a more reasonable position on the so-called divorce bill “because some money is better than no money”.

Yet this approach underestimates the risk of human error – that both sides miscalculate and expect the other to back down, with the result that the talks collapse. For this reason, the Government must make Britain as ready as possible for a no-deal scenario.

● James Forsyth is political editor of The Spectator.



## DEFAULT OPTION

PHILIP HAMMOND was warned on Wednesday night that even his own god-daughter might not vote Conservative unless the party sorted out the student finance system. Students will shortly be charged an exorbitant 6.1 per cent interest on their loans.

Tory MPs left the meeting with a sense that the Chancellor understood the 6.1 per cent rate had become a totemic issue, which was making it nigh-on-impossible for the Tories to appeal to young graduates.

**How can the Government fix this problem?**

One reason why the interest rate is so high is because so many students never pay back their loans.

It would be sensible to make universities liable for at least some of the cost if their graduates default.

It would make them think twice about charging thousands of pounds for courses that do little to improve their students' future earning potential.

## CAPITAL IDEA IS DESERVING OF TREASURY BACKING

THE Tories desperately need a popular capitalism agenda.

They need to show voters they too can benefit from the economic system.

So it is disappointing that the institutional Treasury has set itself against a “Patient Capital ISA”, which would see savers invest in start-up companies in the hope of making big returns in

20 years' time. This policy would both help British entrepreneurs – by providing them with more seed capital – and enable savers to benefit from the rise of these new firms. Hammond should put the idea in his Budget box.

● TONY BLAIR will be back on your TV screens this weekend. The former Prime Minister will be out talking about Brexit again – to

the frustration of the Labour leadership, who wish he would just shut up.

Blair bashing Brexit the day before Labour votes against the EU withdrawal isn't ideal timing for the party.

His presence reminds many traditional Labour voters of what they were voting against in the EU referendum.